

**Opening Remarks – Hepatitis B&C Event**  
**Ambassador Michael D. Kirby**  
**Chisinau**  
**March 11, 10:00 - 11:30**

Mr. Minister, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning. It is a great pleasure to be here today at the launch of Moldova's first hepatitis B and C communication campaign. Cases of chronic hepatitis B and C are increasing significantly and complications from these infections are a leading cause of death in Moldova, so this campaign is not only timely but crucial.

As part of the United States Government's long standing commitment to improve the health and well being of people worldwide, we have made substantial investments in the control and prevention of infectious diseases in developing and transitional countries. Our work is based on a clear development principle – we collaborate with host country partners to both prevent illness and strengthen existing health systems for prevention, treatment and control of disease.

In Moldova, we are focusing our efforts on prevention. As the experts tell us, many people, knowingly or unknowingly, are at risk for transmitting or contracting hepatitis B and C. A nationwide survey funded by USAID revealed that only 12% of the population in Moldova have accurate knowledge on routes of transmission of hepatitis B and C. This is an alarming statistic and one we seek to change.

Through this campaign, we want to help people to protect themselves and their families. We want them to know about hepatitis B and C. We want to promote and enable healthy behavior. And we want people to use the regional voluntary counseling and testing centers.

Prevention is much more effective than treatment and it is our first line of defense. By implementing a nationwide communication campaign, we can prevent infections before they happen. And in doing so, we reduce the public health risk of these life-threatening diseases for all Moldovans.

I want to personally commend the Ministry of Health for its leadership and dedication in addressing hepatitis B and C. Through the national hepatitis B vaccination program for infants, the government has made substantial progress controlling the spread of this disease. The United States remains committed to continuing our partnership with you for the health and well being of your citizens.

I also want to congratulate the Preventing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B and C Project team for its excellent work. We look forward to a successful implementation of this important campaign.

Thank you.